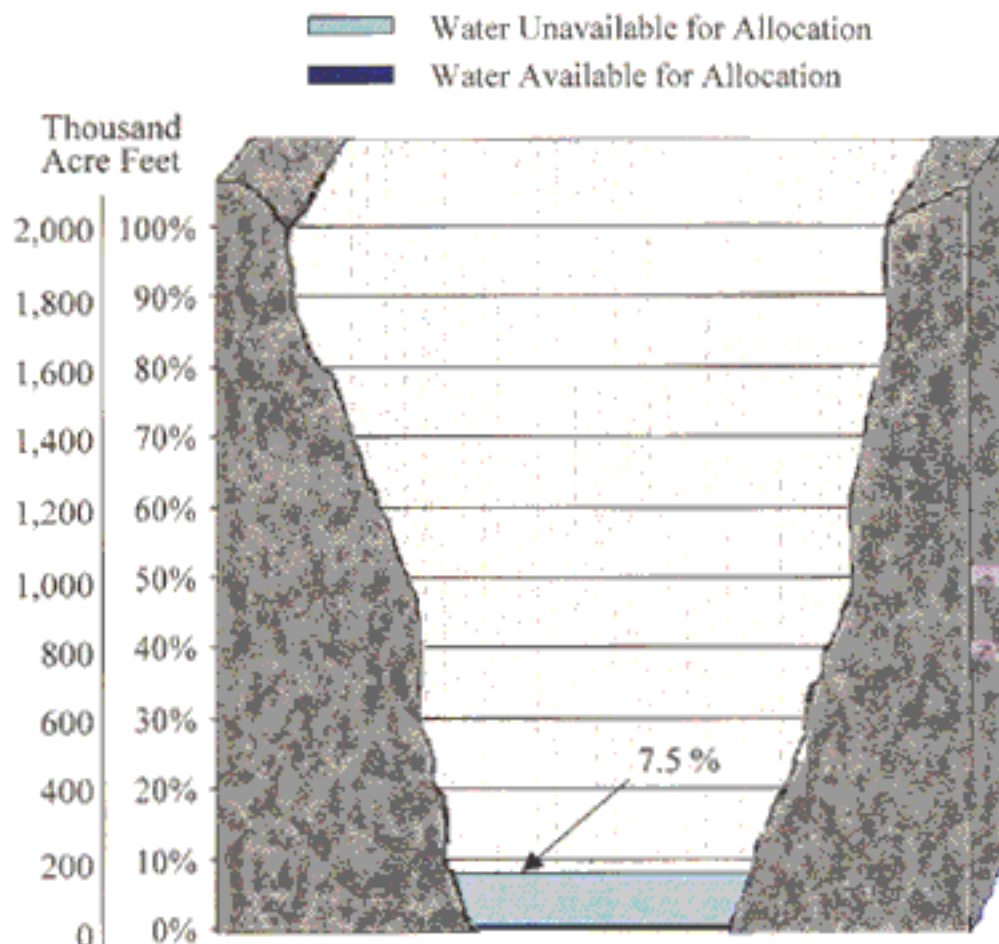


# Drought Watch on the Rio Grande

## Surface Water Supply Available October 20, 2003

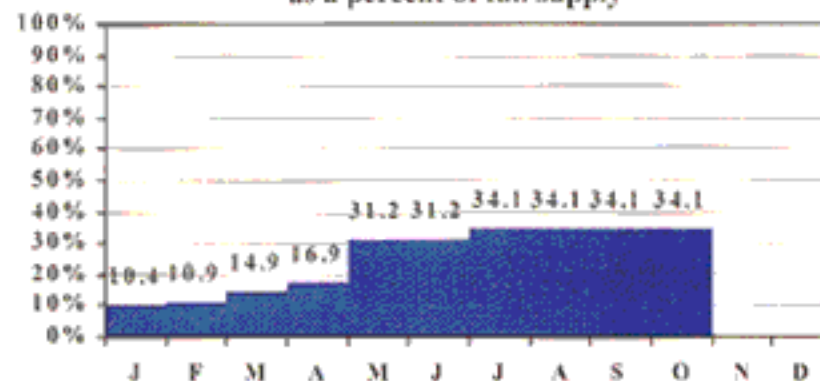
### Combined Elephant Butte and Caballo Reservoir Storage



### Water Supply Situation

- **Surface water supply** (runoff) to Elephant Butte Reservoir for the water year was only **11%** of the 30-year average. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> lowest inflow on record.
- **Water in storage** is only **7.5%** of combined storage capacity. Because of Compact obligations, only ten percent of the stored water is available for area users. Reservoir gates were closed September 19, 2003. Releases from storage will resume next spring.
- **The 2003 allocation** for the year is **34.1%** or about one-third of a full supply.

### 2003 Water allocation to agricultural and urban users as a percent of full supply





# Texas Agricultural Experiment Station

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October 20, 2003

## PRESS RELEASE – “DROUGHT WATCH ON THE RIO GRANDE”

### **Reservoir Gates Close - 2003 is Fifth Lowest River Inflow on Record**

The gates on the Rio Grande Project Reservoirs, Elephant Butte and Caballo, closed for the 2003 irrigation season on September 19. Until the gates reopen next spring downstream flows in the river will be from return flows of irrigation water stored in the soil and precipitation. Small gains in the very low reservoir levels have occurred since the gates were closed from some late season rainfall in the middle Rio Grande basin above the reservoirs. Present storage at Elephant Butte Reservoir is at 159,000 acre-feet and Caballo Reservoir storage is about 7,000 acre-feet. This is only 7.5% of a total storage capacity of 2.2 million acre feet but, much of this water is currently unavailable for downstream use. Rio Grande Compact credit water storage for Colorado and New Mexico in Elephant Butte Reservoir is about 142,290 acre-feet, leaving 16,710 acre feet or about ten percent of water in the reservoir available for Rio Grande Project water users.

Water inflows to Elephant Butte Reservoir for 2003 were less than 11% of the 30-year average and are the fifth lowest inflows on record. Water allocation for the 2003 irrigation season, which takes into account the water relinquishment agreement between Texas and New Mexico plus inflow to the reservoirs, evaporation and river delivery efficiencies, remained at 34.1% or about one-third of a full water supply for the entire irrigation season. Releases from storage for Rio Grande Project water users were about 363,000 acre-feet for 2003. Deliveries at the river heading for the Elephant Butte Irrigation District, El Paso County Water Improvement District #1 and to Mexico were about 328,800 acre-feet. The Rio Grande Compact Commission with representatives from the three states in the basin and Federal Government will meet in March 2004 to review and approve the 2003 water year accounting records.

Snowpack in the mountains of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado is the source of most of Elephant Butte Reservoir water. A good winter snowpack is needed to help replenish river flows and reservoir storage. The U.S. National Weather Service three month and 12 month outlooks for the Rio Grande watershed are for below normal to average precipitation and above normal temperatures.

“Drought Watch on the Rio Grande” is provided by Texas A&M University, El Paso Agricultural Research and Extension Center in collaboration with the United States Bureau of Reclamation El Paso Field Office and USDA-CSREES Rio Grande Basin Initiative. Updates of Drought Watch will be issued as conditions change.

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